

Biomass incentives for farmers to continue

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By Bill Campbell, Staff Writer

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will resume incentives this summer for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners growing and harvesting biomass for renewable energy.

The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. BCAP provides financial assistance to establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a qualifying energy facility.

Financial assistance is available for costs of harvesting and transporting agriculture or forest residues to facilities that convert biomass crops into energy. Eligible crops may include corn residue, diseased or insect infested wood materials, or orchard waste.

The energy facility must first be approved by USDA to accept the biomass crop. Facilities must apply or renew BCAP qualification status to receive parts of \$11.5 million of federal funds allocated for delivery of biomass materials through December.

More than 200,000 tons of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management properties were removed and used to produce renewable energy, while reducing the risk of forest fire. Nineteen energy facilities in 10 states participated.

Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners can also receive financial assistance to grow biomass crops that will be converted into energy in BCAP project areas. New BCAP project area proposals will be solicited through the fall with new project area announcements and enrollments taking place next spring.

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